

**SUMMARY OF THE
FIELD ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2000**

The Field Activities Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Friday, September 8, 2000, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by the committee chair, Mr. Daniel Bivins of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussions of action items from the July 27th meeting and to take up new agenda items.*

INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bivins opened the meeting by asking the attendees to introduce themselves to announce their presence at the teleconference. Ms. Jeanne Hankins, official liaison to the committee from the NELAC Board of Directors, also participated in the call. Mr. Bivins reviewed the meeting agenda and listed the action items for discussion.

DEFINITION OF LABORATORY

ISO Guide 2 does not define the term laboratory and therefore the committee will need to pursue an ISO definition. Ms. Hankins will ask Mr. Gary Johnson of the EPA to look into this. Mobile laboratory considerations should be given in the scope of the standard, not in the definition.

Report from Recent NELAC Board of Directors' Meeting

The committee had sought advice from the Board on the use of "notes" within the NELAC Standard. Such notes contain non-mandatory information and are generally not used in the existing standard. The Board will consider this topic in its September 14th meeting. In the meantime, the draft Field Activities general standard will retain its notes.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Advisability of Preparing Medium-Specific Standards

Standards for field activities extend beyond the general sampling standards. A survey taken years ago listed priorities for inclusion in medium-specific standards, such as water and soil. This topic will be discussed at the upcoming Sixth NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC 6i). If medium-specific standards are recommended, formation of a subcommittee will be requested and members will be recruited. It was suggested the Field Activities Committee study how Chapter 5 (Quality Systems) extended its standard by including appendices.

Concerns Regarding Direct Use of ISO 17025 Language

The Board liaison reported that EPA Headquarters is studying this concern and is setting up a meeting with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to discuss options. Answers to this concern are anticipated by the end of the month. Incidentally, the Canadian Standards Association has some of its own standards freely available on their web site.

Committee Membership

Mr. Bivins announced that one committee member plans to resign due to other commitments and another member who has not been able to participate will be replaced. Mr. Bivins brought up the names of two potential committee member replacements. One would be a voting member, the other a contributor member. Committee members were supportive of those suggested. Mr. Bivins will first ask the candidates to serve and will then write a letter to the NELAC chair, Dr. Charles Brokopp, asking that they be appointed to serve out the terms of those leaving the Field Activities committee.

ASETT Meetings and Status of MSE Standards

Mr. Bivins reported that bi-monthly teleconference meetings of the Air Source Emissions Task Team (ASETT) have been held since their initial meeting on June 15, 2000 in Chapel Hill, NC. On August 14 and 15, a face-to-face meeting was held in Chicago, IL. Mr. Scott Evans, chair of ASETT, and his committee have submitted a draft Measurement of Source Emissions (MSE) standard to ASETT's parent committee, the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) and to this committee, for study and comment. The ASETT draft does not represent consensus from ASETT at this point. Mr. Bivins believes ASETT members will soon ballot (in American Society for Testing & Materials [ASTM] fashion) on separate sections of their draft standard. Mr. Bivins stated that the standard developed thus far by ASETT is based on ISO principles and statements and he thinks it should be placed on the NELAC Website for all to view and that it should be discussed at NELAC 6i in Las Vegas, NV. Before posting, the title page of the draft standard developed by ASETT must be changed to remove NELAC wording.

One concern about the ASETT draft is how performance of source measurement firms is determined. A committee member stated there must be some kind of demonstration of competency to receive accreditation. Another member voiced support for a field assessment of a test to observe whether the test team followed the process given in the firm's quality system documents. There was further discussion of the roles of state assessors and the accreditation of firms by state agencies.

The ASETT draft implies that the observer of a test can sometimes also be the assessor, or that the observer's report can become a part of the assessment process documents. Ms. Hankins suggested that a process needs to be devised that parallels that given in Chapter 4 of the NELAC Standard. It was noted that ASETT does not want to have the MSE standard refer to other chapters of the NELAC Standard, but rather to stand alone. The Field Activities committee

members thought this position may be untenable. The committee agreed that all accrediting agencies should have the same set of criteria for accreditation (or for that matter, de-accreditation). The committee needs to work with ASETT to be sure this point is made and will ask ASETT for clarification on aspects such as the roles of observers and assessors in the accreditation process. Mr. Bivins will talk with ASETT and ask for a schedule of their upcoming activities and plans.

Grandfathering of testing firms was discussed. It was concluded that few states would agree to accredit a stack testing firm without some sort of observation of performance.

Mr. Bivins reported that the MSE subcommittee met on September 10 and recommended that the ASETT draft standard be placed on the web site for study. The MSE committee plans to continue meeting, but acting only in an advisory role.

Mobile Laboratory Issues

Mobile laboratory issues were discussed briefly. One concern is that the process of accreditation for a mobile laboratory takes too long. Dr. Bart Simmons and Mr. Peter Law will locate information from past discussions of mobile laboratories and share it with the committee by e-mail. Mr. Bivins will arrange to have a joint teleconference or a face-to-face meeting of the Accreditation Process and the Field Activities Committees to discuss mutual mobile laboratory concerns.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for Tuesday, October 10, 2000. The teleconference will begin at 1 p.m . EDT. The call-in number and a final agenda will be sent to committee members. Agenda items will include: general sampling standard; ASETT report; media-specific standards; structure of the standard (use of appendices); progress report on MSE standards; and mobile laboratory discussion.

**ACTION ITEMS
FIELD ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ask within EPA about ISO definition of “laboratory” (Hankins)	October 10
2.	Report on BoD’s discussion of use of “notes” in standards (Hankins)	After next BoD meeting
3.	Continue discussion of advisability of suggesting a subcommittee be formed to prepare media-specific standards (Committee)	Ongoing
4.	Update of decisions on use of ISO 17025 language (Hankins)	October 10
5.	Place ASETT draft standard on web site after changing title page and noting ELAB has not reviewed (Bivins to arrange)	Near future
6.	Ask ASETT and ELAB to clarify roles of Observer and Assessor during source testing (Bivins)	Week of September 11
7.	Ask for and distribute schedule of ASETT activities (Bivins)	October 10
8.	Recover and distribute language and discussion regarding “mobile laboratory” (Simmons, Law)	Week of September 11
9.	Set up joint meeting of Accreditation Process and Field Activities committees to exchange comments on mobile laboratories (Bivins)	October 10
10.	Recruit new Field Activities Committee members; ask NELAC chair to appoint them (Bivins)	October 10

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FIELD ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2000**

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